

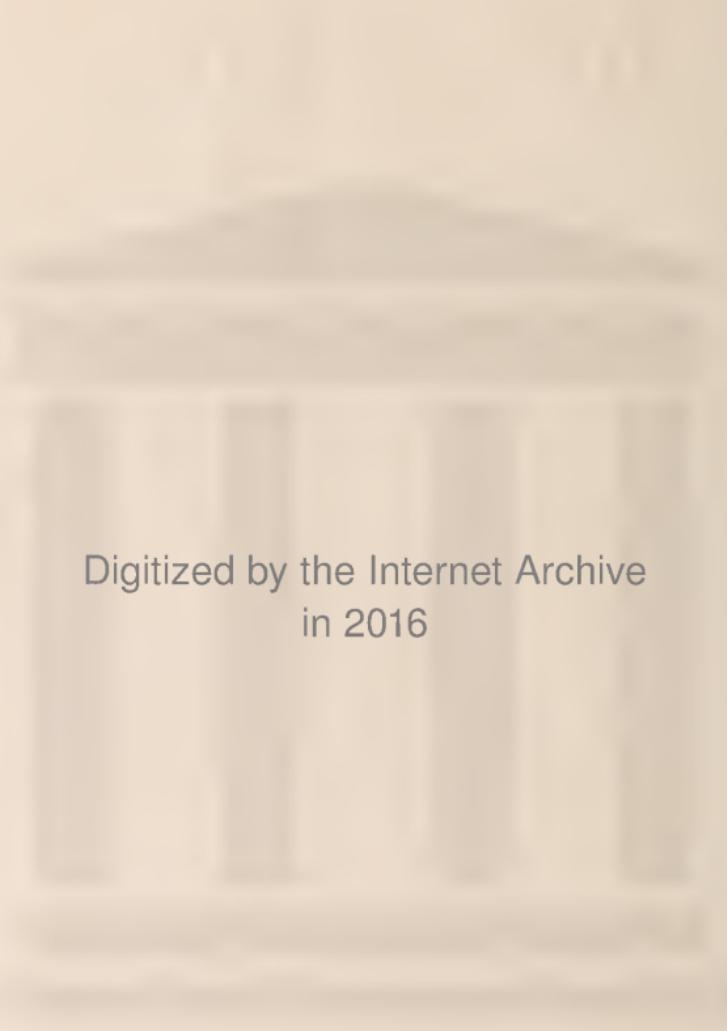
# Our Task Abroad

*By*  
J. Y. AITCHISON, D. D.



AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY  
FORD BUILDING ∴ ASHBURTON PLACE  
BOSTON ∴ MASS.

1919



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2016

<https://archive.org/details/ourtaskabroad00aitc>

## OUR TASK ABROAD

*By J. Y. Aitchison, D.D.*

**B**APTISTS were not popular a hundred years ago. Because they championed the cause of religious liberty they were looked upon as dangerous heretics. The state undertook to regulate by means of fines, imprisonment, or other cruel forms of punishment, the opinions of men, both in the realm of religion and politics. Roger Williams, the prophet of liberty, had said: "It is the will of God that a permission of the most pagan, Jewish, Turkish and anti-Christian conscience be granted to all men in all nations and countries." The Baptists believed this doctrine. They preached it. Many died in its defense. Persecution brought the Baptists of those days into closer brotherhood. They grew from a small company of poor and obscure people, with but few exceptions, to an influential body. When they began to witness the triumph of the principles for which they were contending the result was not altogether wholesome. It is not surprising that a sectarianism, born of their persecution and constant conflict, was developed. This left them somewhat severe and self-sufficient in spirit.

Then, too, the moral condition of the world was most depressing. The spiritually stifling wave of infidelity, which wrought such havoc in France, Germany and England during the latter part of the eighteenth century extended its influence over the United States also. Skepticism became fashionable in the colleges. It held Adoniram Judson in its grip for months, having reached him through one of the most brilliant students in Providence College. The story of Judson's conversion and consecration to missionary service and the hardships attending his journey to Burma, form one of the most interesting and inspiring records of history. What if Judson had been held captive by skepticism? What a loss it would have been to the Baptist cause and to the world! But under the providence of God, Judson became the first foreign

missionary from America to the non-Christian world. His going forth under the American Board, his study of the Bible and his change of views to the Baptist faith while on the high seas, his letter to Baptist friends in America telling of his new convictions regarding church membership, his offering himself as a Baptist missionary, the organization of the first Baptist foreign mission society on May 18, 1814, under the title of "The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions," are all thrilling events in the early history of Baptist foreign mission work.

This Convention had been formed and Judson was in Burma five years before we had a denominational paper. The secular press was not then, as now, favorably disposed to the cause of foreign missions. The very contrary was true. The rank and file, in fact all but a very few church members, were entirely out of sympathy with the enterprise. To Luther Rice and his untiring efforts in America, as well as to Adoniram Judson and his associates in India, posterity owes undying gratitude for the development of the missionary spirit. For twenty long years Luther Rice traveled constantly among the churches, literally spending his energies of soul and body without any thought of self, in an untiring but fruitful effort to awaken a missionary spirit in the churches. At the end of this twenty-year period a marvelous missionary interest was manifest.

In 1834 Baptist work was started in Europe. Rev. Isaac Wilmarth went as our first Baptist representative to France. In the same year Rev. J. G. Oncken and several others were baptized near Hamburg. This was the beginning of our work in Germany. In 1838 the baptism of Julius Kobner proved to be the beginning of Baptist history in Denmark. During these intervening years American Baptists have received countless blessings, in missionaries, financial support and inspiration from our Baptist brothers who have come from these countries. Our work has been richly blessed of God in Scandinavian countries, as well as in Germany. Its reflex influence has been felt profoundly in our work among these Euro-

pean people in America, so that today no other denomination has as great a hold upon these nationalities as have the Baptists. This fact carries with it not only a cause for gratitude but also a great responsibility.

In 1830 Rev. John T. Jones was sent to open work in Bangkok, China. Work was extended from this center to Macao in 1836. The South China Mission was opened at Hongkong in 1841. This was later transferred to Swatow. In December, 1834, fifteen new missionaries were sent to reenforce the work in Burma. What an event for those early days! The church at home was awakened: the prayers of the missionaries on the far-flung battle line were being answered. In the same year work was undertaken among the Telugus of South India, and in 1836 Rev. Nathan Brown and O. T. Cutler of the Burma Mission opened work in Sadiya, Assam. In 1838 the Free Baptists began work in Bengal-Orissa.

Mention should be made here also of the fact that the Convention began work among the American Indians in 1817. Missionaries were sent to tribes in New York State and on the western frontier. A great interest developed also among the Cherokees of North Carolina and Georgia. While these tribes were on their way to Indian Territory, whither they were compelled to remove in 1838, 170 made confession of Christ during the journey. In 1865 the work among the Indians was transferred to the Home Mission Society, under whose direction it has developed greatly.

The Telugu Mission in South India was opened in 1835. Five years later the first Telugu convert was baptized. In 1845 the results had been so meagre that the Missionary Union would doubtless have closed the mission but for the earnest appeal of Dr. Judson, then at home on furlough. It was decided to send Rev. Lyman Jewett to reenforce the work. More years passed with no apparent fruits so that again in 1853 the question of closing the mission was considered. In the course of a long debate one of the speakers referred to the work as the "Lone Star" of our mission work on a western shore of the Bay of Bengal. The next day Dr. S. F. Smith, the author of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," read the now famous poem "The Lone Star."

## OUR TASK ABROAD

“Shine on, ‘Lone Star!’ Thy radiance bright  
 Shall spread o’er all the eastern sky;  
 Morn breaks apace from gloom and night;  
 Shine on, and bless the pilgrim’s eye.

“Shine on, ‘Lone Star!’ I would not dim  
 The light that gleams with dubious ray;  
 The lonely star of Bethlehem  
 Led on a bright and glorious day.”

After earnest prayer and amidst applause the question was settled.

Again, however, in 1862, for the last time the question was reopened when Mr. Jewett declared, “I will never give up the Telugus. I will go back alone to live and die among them.” Then Dr. J. G. Warren suggested that they send someone with Mr. Jewett as he was entitled to a Christian burial. Dr. John E. Clough was sent back with him.

After twenty-five years of sowing the harvest began to appear, first by scores, then by hundreds, and thousands, until on that memorable day, July 3, 1878, 2,222 were baptized at Ongole. In three months 10,000 were added to the church, which had grown from eight members when it was organized, June 1, 1867, to nearly twenty-five thousand in 1884. The marvelous blessing of God upon the “Lone Star Mission” brought great encouragement to the churches at home.

These were the beginnings of American Baptist foreign mission work, made possible by the Judsons and their associates in Burma and by Luther Rice, Rev. Lucius Bolles, D.D., Home Secretary of the Union and others in America. Through the devotion of these men to the cause of Christ and the needs of the non-Christian world, and owing to their unconquerable spirits American Baptists were enabled in a brief period of five years (from 1833-38) to open work in Europe, China, South India, Assam and Bengal-Orissa. The East China field was entered at Ningpo in 1843 and in 1889 work was begun in the great Szechuan province of faraway West China, where two missionaries were supported several years by the young men of Minnesota. In 1893 a strong reinforcement was sent to this field.

It was not until 1872 that we began our work in Japan with Rev. Nathan Brown at the age of sixty-four as founder of the mission. The rapidity with which Dr. Brown learned the Japanese language, translated and wrote hymns, is one of the marvels of missionary achievements.

While work had been conducted for a time in cooperation with the American Negro Baptists on the west coast of Africa, later to be abandoned in 1840, it was not until 1884 that Northern Baptists reentered this great field by taking over from the Livingstone Inland Mission—an English Society which had established work in the Congo Free State—about twenty missionaries and the work at seven stations. Soon after American occupation of the Philippine Islands, the Society opened a mission on the island of Panay, one of the southern group. This was in 1900. It was the latest field entered by the Society.

Foreign mission activities of Northern Baptists today (including the work of the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society) are being conducted in ten fields. Foreign Secretary Joseph C. Robbins is charged by our Board with administrative responsibility in Burma, South India, Assam and Bengal-Orissa. Foreign Secretary James H. Franklin has similar responsibilities in Japan, East, South and West China, the Philippines and Africa. Dr. Franklin also has oversight of our work in Europe, where we cooperate with our Baptist constituency. The latest report shows we have 726 missionaries, who are now assisted by 6,872 native workers, or an average of more than nine native workers for each missionary; 1,745 organized churches, with 186,388 members and 89,661 pupils in Sunday schools; 127 stations with 2,696 schools, ranging from primary to college grade; 72 hospitals and dispensaries, where in a single year more than 100,000 sufferers were cared for by Christian doctors and nurses; besides several industrial plants, for practical training, which is so essential if primitive peoples are ever to learn the art of self-support.

During the last hundred years over 348,000 converts have been baptized on all our mission fields. Statistics, however, can not tell of the hundreds of thousands who

have received a Christian education, nor the results of missionary service in creating higher social standards, in inaugurating reform movements, in winning recognition for the Christian Sabbath, in producing a friendliness for Christianity nor of the changes wrought in the religious life and thought of the peoples with whom missionaries have come in contact. The total population of these fields is about 535,000,000. There are at least 61,000,000 people in the fields immediately adjacent to our Baptist missions who must look to Northern Baptists for the gospel in this generation. If we fail to do our full duty by these peoples millions of them will have to live their lives without Christ.

In 1846 the Southern Baptists separated from their Northern brethren and the name of the organization was changed to the "American Baptist Missionary Union." In 1872 the women organized separately and maintained an Eastern and a Western society for a number of years, but these were merged into one great society in 1914. The year 1908 marked a new era in the history of our work in the organization of the Northern Baptist Convention. All mission societies and boards were thus brought into closer relationship with each other. In connection with this important change the name of the Society became the "American Baptist Foreign Mission Society." Another decided and most gratifying step toward Baptist unity was witnessed when in 1911 the missionary work of Free Baptists was merged with that of the larger body of Northern Baptists.

In the spirit of Christ, and with compassion upon the multitudes, who are as sheep without a shepherd, our missionaries have gone forth to preach the good news to all classes of people. To those in Europe bound down by formal religion and sacramentalism our representatives have declared the eternal principles of liberty of conscience and stood for a spiritual religion until we have lived to see the marvel of the world fighting for those principles of liberty and democracy which are the product and pride of Baptist history.

In non-Christian lands conditions vary widely. In Burma to the wild Karens our missionaries had to give a

written language, as well as a redemptive religion, and in return have witnessed the gospel with its wonder-working power recreating the race. To the Burmans, the Karens, the Talains, the Shans, the Kachins, the Chins, and in later years, to the Lahu and Wa races, have been given churches and schools, which are slowly but surely displacing the old monastery schools and destroying the power of Buddhism. With joy and gratitude we record the fact that in Burma today 817 of the 1064 churches are self-supporting. This is a larger percentage of self-supporting Baptist churches than can be found in any other field, including the territory of the Northern Baptist Convention.

In Assam our missionaries have seen the gospel work the miracle of transforming savage head-hunters into peaceful, law-abiding citizens. In addition to work among the Assamese and the immigrant coolie population from Central India, our missionaries have labored among the Garos, the Rabhas, the Nagas, the Mikirs, the Abors and the Miris. Dr. Thomas S. Barbour, referring to the work in Burma and Assam, said: "The work in these two oldest fields of the Society has included labors in the most isolated sections of Asia, perpetuating all the romance and calling for all the physical heroism of the earliest periods of the missionary enterprise."

In India, the home of the three great militant faiths of the world, Buddhism, Hinduism and Mohammedanism, with the caste system, embracing four main castes and 2,378 sub-castes, all possessing such rigid distinctions that it is impossible for a man to pass from one social grade to another, our missionaries, with true apostolic faith and devotion, have borne witness to the power of the Son of God to accomplish what her militant faiths have failed to do for her in breaking down the caste system and in bringing loving ministry and relief to the helpless, orphaned childhood of India. Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bombay and a justice of the Bombay High Court, said recently: "The ideas that lie at the heart of the gospel of Christ are slowly but surely permeating every part of Hindu society and modifying every phase of Hindu thought."

Any attempt, however, to estimate the significance of the last hundred years of the foreign mission enterprise with our faces toward the past would show a lack of appreciation of real values. It was because Judson's face was turned toward the future that his appealing words sounded as a great bugle call to the few, scattered and feeble Baptists to unite their interests, to the end that the non-Christian world might be given the gospel of Christ. In those days the doors of India, China, Japan, Africa and practically all the countries then referred to as "heathen nations" were closed to the gospel. What it cost Carey, Judson, Duff in India; Morrison, Martyn, in China; Verbeck, Hepburn, Davis in Japan; Moffatt, Livingstone, Mackay, Stewart in Africa; in sacrifice, suffering, hardships beggaring description, testing of faith and courage, to plant the gospel in these lands, we in this generation know but little. These men, than whom the Church of Christ had none greater in their day, were pioneers of the great missionary enterprise. Through their prayers and devotion and sacrifice we of today may behold a miracle—the doors of non-Christian nations standing wide open to the gospel. Prof. Edward C. Moore says: "The church today is not only confronting the greatest opportunity it has ever had, but the greatest opportunity it ever can have, since there are no more Asias or Africas to be opened to the gospel."

Who can doubt the opportunity in Africa, with the forces of Islam being routed and the church population outnumbering the pagan in Uganda—the very heart of the continent? In Kamerun, under the leadership of American Presbyterians, the gospel is winning its way marvelously. In other parts single communion services are attended by more than eight thousand native Christians.

In China where Morrison labored with such untiring faith and courage for seven years before winning the first convert and for twenty-eight years more before he and his colleagues could point to five additional converts—only six church members after thirty-four years' labor—today we find men of education and social position in comparatively large numbers enrolling themselves in classes for

the study of the Bible. China now has a Protestant church membership of over 300,000 and a Protestant community of over 700,000, with Christians located in at least 7,000 different places throughout the republic. Those who are familiar with conditions in China are saying that we are on the eve of a genuine mass movement toward Christianity on the part of China's educated classes. New emphasis is being placed today upon the need of a genuine spirit of evangelism. The call of the hour is for trained Christian men who can become living witnesses for Christ. China must be won to Christ by her own people. America's best contribution to China, as to many other non-Christian lands, in this day, is to help train up Chinese evangelists, teachers and leaders in all activities of life, who shall be able to interpret Christ and his gospel to their own countrymen. Our schools in non-Christian lands have always been openly and strongly Christian. May it ever continue thus. Only as we educate men and women to the fullest devotion to Christ and his gospel can we hope to accomplish our mission in these non-Christian lands. An educated leadership with an adulterated Christian spirit will never win the world to Christ.

For many years American Baptists stood first in the list of all foreign mission boards in the number of native church members secured and of organized native churches on foreign mission fields. God is still opening up to us in these days some wonderful evangelistic opportunities, such as Kengtung and the region across the northeast border of Burma in China. Our missionaries tell us there are thousands of people in those fields who could be brought into fellowship with Christ and into the church if evangelists, teachers, equipment and adequate support could be provided. But in all fields today missionaries are compelled to think not only in terms of how to make converts to Christianity, but also how to care for and train the masses of converts when they are received. This is bound to become of increasingly greater importance as the years come and go. As the evangelism of non-Christian lands advances the problem becomes more and more a question "not of persuasion so much as of training."

And what shall we say of India? William Carey baptized his first convert in 1800. During the years that have passed millions of believers have been gathered into the church. Discontent with Hinduism is well illustrated in one place where the increase of church members has been 400 per cent. in ten years. In another place the officials scouted at the idea of a Methodist missionary, who estimated that a census would reveal 10,000 Christians in his district. The returns showed a total of 18,000.

The religions of the world which have opposed Christianity, or have stood in its way, are losing their hold upon the natives. The old faiths have failed. What a testimony to the value of Christianity is witnessed in the fact that the Buddhist revival in Japan is based on a wholesale adoption of the methods of the Christian missionaries. The singing of "Buddha Loves Me This I Know" and "All Hail the Power of Buddha's Name," the organization of "Young Men's Buddhist Associations" and other similar signs, indicate an appreciation of the values of Christianity which will shortly afford the Christian leaders the opportunity to substitute the name of Christ for that of Buddha. The conduct of the Buddhists already reveals the fact that in Japan their religion has failed to give them what their hearts crave. The present stage, in which the leaders of the Buddhist revival think the power of Christianity is in names and forms, will soon pass. Will the church be ready in that day with a sufficient band of trained workers to reap the harvest of souls for Christ?

As we compare conditions today with those of a hundred years ago we find the Karen churches supporting missionaries in remote districts of Burma, Siam and China while the Telugu Christians have sent two of their number as missionaries and give financial support to the work at Natal, Africa. Thus it appears that our oldest missions are doing quite as extensive a piece of foreign mission work today as all our American Baptists were doing a century ago. And now in place of a few missionaries, who had to endure indescribable hardships in order to be allowed to witness for Christ in lands which were then closed to the gospel message, we find wide open doors

and easy access to practically all lands. The need of trained, well-equipped preachers, teachers, industrial workers, doctors and nurses is the great outstanding call of our mission fields today. In the next five years our Boards must send at least 222 missionaries if we are to provide adequate leadership in the fields where we are now doing work. That our representatives may make their lives count to the full and that the work may be conducted along the lines of highest efficiency our boards will also need during the same period vastly larger sums of money.

A century ago God gave to the Baptists through Judson and others a new vision of his will and purpose. In these days he is giving men and women a new vision of how to use their wealth. The Coles Memorial High School at Kurnool, and the Coles-Ackerman Memorial High School at Nellore, South India; the Memorial Tower at Rangoon, Burma; the Gertrude Lewis Memorial Hostel at Gauhati, Assam; the Van Deman Memorial Hall at Chengtu, West China; the Haskell Gymnasium at Shanghai; the Pickford Memorial Hospital at Kinawa, East China; the Rhoda Roblee Barker Memorial at Hopo, South China; the Gertrude Preston Rutherford Memorial School soon to be erected at Hanumakonda, South India; also the Science Building soon to be erected at Shanghai and other buildings are evidences of the appreciation on the part of men and women of wealth of the importance of the missionary enterprise.

One of God's noblemen has undertaken to do a big piece of work in Szechuan Province. Our Board has been placed in a position where it can proceed to erect residences, schools, hospitals and other buildings as needed at a cost of approximately \$200,000.00. This one man has a vision of making a great investment in the Kingdom of God in West China. He will thus be the means under God of relieving human suffering, dispelling ignorance, superstition and fear and of bringing the light and blessing of Christ to multitudes of people. What an investment! The same spirit of God is moving upon the hearts of these men and women of wealth that led out the missionary pioneers a century ago.

Great things are ahead of us. Who will provide chapels, hospitals, residences and schools for our thirty-seven missionaries now working with inadequate equipment in the Belgian Congo Mission, so as to enable them to make their lives count for the most? Who will finance the whole enterprise of the Jorhat Christian Schools in Assam, where, fed by our twelve mission stations serving four and a half millions of people, we are building up a Christian school system out of which will come leaders for all spheres of activity? Who will finance Wayland Academy at Hang-chow and develop a Christian man-making institution which will help to win China's four hundred millions to Christ? Who will furnish the money for Judson College in connection with the new Burma University, and thus make possible the training of Christian leaders in the land where Judson invested his life so full of sacrifice until its richness has overflowed into all the earth? Who will be prepared to furnish church buildings for Japan and conserve the harvest which is surely coming as the fruitage of the years in which our faithful missionaries have been sowing the seed, and in which Captain Bickel, embracing every opportunity to preach Christ, sailed the Inland Sea in his "Gospel Ship"? Where are the 222 young business men who will underwrite the salaries of the new missionaries we are praying God to raise up to go to the field in the next five years? Where are the 150 people in America who, while enjoying the comforts of Christian homes, will build residences for our missionaries abroad? Where are the 75 Baptist churches comfortably housed which will erect houses of worship for the churches in non-Christian lands, where the people have not yet learned the value of Christianity or the art of self-support? These are but a few of the many opportunities which our Board has to offer to men and women whom the Lord has blessed with this world's goods. Where can investments yielding more priceless returns be found?

The world is expecting greater things of the church of today than ever before. Evidences are unmistakable that God is leading his people to a program built on a vastly larger scale than any previous generation has ever undertaken. The only remedy for the ills of humanity

is the Gospel of Christ. No program however large or small will succeed if it fails to recognize the saving power and lordship of the Son of God. His Gospel must be applied to all conditions of life and to all peoples in all lands. This applies to the social, industrial and religious conditions of America as well as to other nations. We are witnessing in these days the awful spectacle of masses of men determined to shape up a program for the world's future without any consideration of the church. The eyes of the world are on the churches of America. In the light of her resources of money and men and her responsibility as custodian of the gospel of salvation for all peoples, if the church fails her Lord and the world at this hour she will surely lose her own soul.

**“If God ever called a church to fulfill national aspirations by carrying on a work which a nation has so well begun, God is now calling upon the Church of Christ to do that thing for which the past centuries of achievement have been but a day of preparation.”**

---

---

For additional literature or information regarding the work of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, write to any of the following:

1. **The District Secretary of your District.**
2. **Literature Department, Box 41, Boston, Mass.**

For information regarding gifts, write to

**J. Y. AITCHISON,  
Home Secretary**  
**Box 41, Boston, Mass.**

---

---

173-2M-5-8-1919